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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CARC
USUN FOR WASILIEWSKI

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TAGS: PREL PGOV EPET UNGA AM

SUBJECT: FM OSKANIAN UPEAT ON N-K NEGOTIATIONS, WARNS
AGAINST PASSING GUAM RESOLUTION IN NEW YORK

Classified By: CDA A.F.Godfrey for reason 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

¶1. (C) In a December 1 briefing to Chiefs of Diplomatic Missions resident in Yerevan, FM Oskanian said that the November 28 meeting between Presidents Kocharian and Aliyev was "positive and productive." He went into limited detail about new elements which will be the basis of future discussions between the Foreign Ministers and said that the Presidents "did not rule out" a follow-up meeting. Oskanian warned that passage of a GUAM resolution at the UN would derail what now seemed to be a promising negotiation process. He called on COMs to ask their capitals to oppose the resolution. Oskanian made the same basic points, albeit with less detail, in a December 1 press conference. End Summary.

Briefing Diplomats on "Positive" Minsk Meeting

¶2. (C) FM Oskanian convoked all Chiefs of Diplomatic Missions on December 1 to brief on the outcome of meetings in Minsk and to lay down markers on how Armenia would react to passage of a UN resolution on "frozen conflicts" sponsored by the GUAM states. While he described the briefing as simply the next installment of his regular series, he opened by stating that he sought to correct some "contradictory statements" which had been circulating in the press. "Our take," Oskanian explained, "was generally positive. There was strong focus on principles, building on work done with the co-chairs during meetings of the foreign ministers, and while there was not complete consensus, there seemed to be a convergence of views." He cautioned diplomats not to be over-optimistic in their reports, but said they should not be pessimistic, either.

A Few Details, Including "Automaticity"

¶3. (C) When pressed, Oskanian explained that the "principle of automaticity" was one of the key new ideas discussed in Minsk. While he would not say what the triggers or "default values" would be, the sides were discussing how to account for the possibility that working groups on the two most contentious issues -- withdrawal from Kelbajar and the status of N-K itself -- would not be able to reach agreement. Discussions surrounding Lachin seemed to be working toward a consensus solution, but negotiators sought to set a deadline for negotiations after which the two issues would be resolved along pre-agreed lines. Oskanian would not say what period was under discussion, but in describing the "automaticity"

principle, he said that "if, say, after ten years, the working group reaches no agreement on the status of Karabakh, that status would automatically become x." (Note: Oskanian's explanation must have been difficult to translate as we were beset by a gaggle of confused Russian-speaking Chiefs of Mission at a reception later that day to explain our take. End Note.)

More Meetings Likely

¶ 4. (C) On timing of next steps, Oskanian said that the presidents had agreed to digest the Minsk discussions and then instruct their foreign ministers on how to proceed. Most likely, there would be another round or two of meetings at the Minister level, but Oskanian added that President Kocharian "did not rule out" another meeting of the presidents, even before Armenia's election. The elections had, however, begun to affect how information regarding discussions would be disseminated; even if there were to be a "breakthrough," nothing would be announced until after the election. Oskanian said that there would be no meeting of the FMs at the OSCE Ministerial as the presidents "had not yet instructed" the Foreign Ministers and there would be no substance to discuss.

Passing GUAM Resolution Will Derail Negotiations

¶ 5. (C) Oskanian was blunt about the damage a GUAM-sponsored resolution would do to the negotiation process: "If a resolution passes on December 7, there will be negative consequences. Armenia will insist that 'N-K authorities' be represented at the talks, which Azerbaijan would surely

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reject. Even though this resolution would produce nothing toward resolving the conflict, would be nothing more than a piece of paper, there will be clear consequences." He said that the resolution "must not be supported," and asked that all those present press capitals to either vote against or to abstain.

Oskanian's Busy Travel Schedule Includes Stop in Iran

¶ 6. (C) Oskanian laid out a busy schedule for the first half of December. First, he would travel to Brussels to meet with the co-chairs and FM Mammadyarov to discuss the text of a paragraph for inclusion into the OSCE Ministerial statement. Next, he would travel to Strasbourg to meet with Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis. He would then travel again to Brussels, this time to meet with NATO SYG de Hoop Scheffer, after which he would travel to Paris for an event involving the Armenian community in France. Finally, on December 17, he would travel to Tehran to prepare for a possible high-level visit to Iran to commemorate the completion of the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline.

Armenia Will Respond to Call for OSCE Observers. Real Soon.

¶ 7. (C) We pressed Oskanian again to invite long-term OSCE/ODIHR observers to Armenia in advance of parliamentary elections expected to take place in May. Oskanian said that Armenia would consider the OSCE Ministerial as the formal request by the organization to invite observers; Armenia would respond to this call not long after the Ministerial.
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